

CREATIVE WRITING: INTRODUCTION TO FICTION & POETRY
CRWRI-UA 815, SECTION 016
TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS 3:30 – 4:45 PM

INSTRUCTOR: Will Frazier
EMAIL: wtf219@nyu.edu
OFFICE HOURS: BY APPOINTMENT

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

In this course, students will write in response to prompts each week and by the end of the semester have 12 new poems and stories. We will work in the exciting, paradoxical alchemy whereby a given constraint or obstruction (both formal and thematic) can make for the most inventive and imaginatively expansive writing. We will approach language with curiosity, discernment, and wonder, as we aim to “dwell in possibility” as Emily Dickinson says. In our weekly discussions of craft, we will focus on the technical elements that make for strong, resonant writing. We will also consider a writer’s attitude toward their subject matter, as well as their relationship to the reader. By reading essays by writers, we will simultaneously build a vocabulary that will allow us to discuss assigned poems and stories (as well as one another’s writing) with precision, generosity, and depth.

CLASS STRUCTURE

Every Tuesday, we will discuss readings from the course packet. Students should arrive in class having completed all assigned readings, equipped with some initial thoughts and questions about the texts.

Every Thursday, we will have workshop. If you are up for workshop, you will have already distributed hard copies of your piece the previous Thursday, allowing the class ample time to read and think about your work. **Please bring printed, hard copies of your poem or story for your classmates. You may not email your work. No exceptions.** If you are not up for workshop, you will turn in one copy of your completed exercise poem or story to me.

OFFICE HOURS

I will be available for office hours by appointment. All students are encouraged to set up at least one meeting over the course of the semester. Please email me at wtf219@virginia.edu to schedule a time.

READINGS

A course packet of readings and prompts will be available for purchase at Unique Copy Center at 252 Greene St (212-420-9198).

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

1. **Writing exercises (20%):** Weekly prompts relate to the theme of the assigned reading and ask students to engage with craft through a specific set of constraints, which are meant to open up new avenues and approaches in your writing. In response to the prompt, write a **poem or story of less than two pages** (printed front and back of one sheet of paper, reasonable font, size 12, single or double-spaced).

Students will hand in 8 exercises total. You may choose which weeks to hand in fiction and which to hand in poetry. But you must turn in at least 3 poems and 3 stories total, while the other 2 pieces may be the genre of your choice.

Prompts are included in sequential order in the course packet. At the end of every Thursday class, we will briefly discuss the prompt for the following week.

In my grading, I will look for proofread work that responds to the prompt with evidence of real engagement and effort.

2. **Workshop submissions (30%):** Each student will bring in 4 pieces for workshop throughout the semester. These pieces should respond to that week's prompt in more depth.

Students will write 2 poems and 2 stories for workshop. Stories for workshop should be between 4 and 8 pages, double-spaced. You will be given a group, X, Y or Z, to determine which days you will be up for workshop.

Never submit a piece you have written for another course or before the class began. We are here to write new work. If you would like to discuss older work, I am happy to do so in office hours.

3. **Midterm riff (10%):** This one page, single-spaced, informal essay is a way to check in on what you are thinking about so far in the course. You may consider discussing a particular assigned text that's lingered with you and perhaps how it relates to concerns emerging in your own writing.
4. **Workshop engagement (15%):** Verbal participation and written feedback factor into this grade. To prepare for workshop, you will have carefully read your classmates' poems and stories not once but several times, and you will have made line edits on each piece. Prioritize observation: what works and how, where could it be pushed, and where did questions arise. Be respectful, be generous, and be invested in what you're critiquing. To ensure we devote equal attention to everyone's work, we will have to be efficient with our time in workshop each week. To that end, it is critical that you prepare thoughts and notes for your classmates in advance and are not simply responding with last minute, off the cuff feedback.
5. **Final portfolio (20%):** Your final portfolio will consist of significant revisions/expansions of 10 pieces from exercises and workshop. The balance of prose and poetry is up to you. You will include a brand new poem or story and a one-page letter to me.
6. **Reading Quizzes (5%):** We'll begin each Tuesday class with a short reading quiz. These will be straightforward and are not meant to trick you. Our discussions will be tedious if students have not completed the reading.

POLICIES

1. **Attendance:** This is a discussion-based class. We all need to be on time and ready to begin at 3:30 pm. Two unexcused absences are permitted. Arriving significantly late to class is considered an absence. More than two absences will lower your final grade by one mark (A becomes A-, B+ becomes B, and so on). Unless you are ill, never miss your own workshop.
2. **Plagiarism:** Any academic dishonesty will be reported to the department and lead to a failing grade in this class.
3. **Electronics:** Laptops, phones, and any other non-medical electronic devices should be **turned off (not just on silent)** and put away before class.
4. **Workshop etiquette:** Good workshops rely on respect and trust. If we don't trust one another, we won't be writing well or getting very much help from one another's feedback. Trust can't happen if people are unprepared, rude, or lack empathy. We will always begin each discussion of someone's poem or story by noting what we think is most successful before we move on to questions or suggestions.
5. **Printing:** Workshop depends on having hard copies of your work. Email in your work **only** if you miss a Thursday class, and bring a hard copy for me on Tuesday. Otherwise, **an emailed piece receives half the grade it would have if it were turned in as a hard copy.**
6. **Food:** Since we meet at a reasonable hour, please do not bring your meals to class. Small snacks are fine as long as they aren't too disruptive.

DISABILITY DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980.

NYU's Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities
726 Broadway, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10003-6675
Telephone: 212-998-4980
Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114
Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>

STUDENT WELLNESS POLICY

Unless we see explicit evidence in workshop that the speaker of a work is the writer themselves, we assume the speaker is fictional. However, certain content relating to murder, depression, suicide, sexual assault, or severe mental distress, such as seems to be a possible cry for help, will likely prompt the instructor's attention. Please send an email putting this work in context before submitting work, especially for workshop, that may be interpreted as such. If you do feel you need someone to talk to at any point in the semester, please feel safe to reach out to me and I can guide you to the NYU Wellness Center.

SCHEDULE

Below is a working syllabus for the semester; some readings may be subject to change.

INTRO	<i>Sep.</i>	3	T	INTRODUCTION / WORKSHOP GROUPS ASSIGNED IN CLASS READING: Rita Dove, "Prose in a Small Space" IN CLASS WRITING EXERCISE
THE UNSAID		5	R	FIRST EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP X READINGS DUE: Louise Glück, "Disruption, Hesitation, Silence," Rainer Maria Rilke, "Archaic Torso of Apollo," Mark Doty, "A Green Crab's Shell," Sappho's fragments (trans. Anne Carson from <i>If Not, Winter</i>)
		10	T	READINGS DUE: Robert Boswell, from "The Half-Known World," Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery," Carmen Maria Machado, "Inventory"
		12	R	GROUP X WORKSHOP EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP Y
MEMORY / PERSPECTIVE		17	T	READINGS DUE: Ted Hughes, "Words and Experience," Joe Brainard, from "I Remember," Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays," Marie Howe, "Sixth Grade," Jorie Graham "Cagnes Sur Mer, 1950," Louise Glück, "Nostros," Robert Hass, "Meditation at Lagunitas," Alice Munro, "Bardon Bus"
		19	R	GROUP Y WORKSHOP EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP Z
LOSS		24	T	READINGS DUE: Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux, "Simile and Metaphor," John Donne, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," Jack Gilbert, "Michiko Dead," Anne Sexton, "The Truth the Dead Know," Marie Howe, "The Gate," Mary Jo Bang, "Worse"
		26	R	GROUP Z WORKSHOP EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP X
CHARACTER	<i>Oct.</i>	1	T	READINGS DUE: Flannery O'Connor, "Good Country People"
		3	R	GROUP X WORKSHOP EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP Y
VARIOUS POETIC FORMS		8	T	READINGS DUE: William Shakespeare, select sonnets, Kim Addonizio, "So What," Terrance Hayes, from "American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin," John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Sharon Olds, "Ode of Girls' Things," Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art," "Sestina," Natalie Diaz, "My Brother at 3 A.M"

- 10 R **GROUP Y WORKSHOP**
EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP Z
- RIFFS DUE 15 T LEGISLATIVE DAY, CLASSES MEET ON MONDAY SCHEDULE
No class. Midterm riffs due in my mailbox at the writer's house
(basement level of 58 W 10th St) **by 5 pm.**
- 17 R **GROUP Z WORKSHOP**
EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP X
- EROS: REACH,
RESTRAINT,
SYNTAX 22 T READINGS DUE: Carl Phillips, from "Muscularity and Eros: On
Syntax," Anne Carson, from "Eros, the Bittersweet," C.P. Cavafy,
"On the Stairs," Carl Phillips, "Alba: Innocence," "No Kingdom,"
Lisa Russ Spaar, "Midas Passional," Stuart Dybek, "We Didn't"
- 24 R **GROUP X WORKSHOP**
EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP Y
- LANDSCAPE 29 T READINGS DUE: James Longenbach, from "The Art of the Poetic
Line," Richard Hugo, "Degrees of Gray in Philipsburg," Robert Frost,
"Directive," Elizabeth Bishop, "At the Fishhouses," "The Moose,"
Charles Wright, from "Apologia Pro Vita Sua"
- 31 R **GROUP Y WORKSHOP**
EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP Z
- FANTASTIC *Nov.* 5 T READINGS DUE: George Saunders, "Sea Oak"
- 7 R **GROUP Z WORKSHOP**
EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP X
- ECSTATIC 12 T READINGS DUE: Emily Dickinson, "Because I could not stop for
Death," "The Brain—is wider than the Sky," Gerard Manley Hopkins,
"The Windhover," Sylvia Plath, "Cut," Sharon Olds, "The Clasp,"
Richard Siken, "Litany in Which Certain Things Are Crossed Out"
- 14 R **GROUP X WORKSHOP**
EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP Y
- RECASTING 19 T READINGS DUE: Ann Beattie, "Snow," David Berman, "Snow,"
Louis MacNeice, "Snow," Mary Ruefle, "Snow"
- 21 R **GROUP Y WORKSHOP**
EXERCISES DUE, WORKSHOP PIECES DUE FROM GROUP Z
- INTIMACY /
HYBRID FORMS 26 T READINGS DUE: Claudia Rankine, from "Citizen," and Maggie Nelson,
from "Bluets"

28 R THANKSGIVING — NO CLASS

REVISION

Dec. 3 T **GROUP Z WORKSHOP**

5 R RADICAL REVISION HANDS-ON WORKSHOP

READINGS DUE: Look over drafts from Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Frost, Sylvia Plath, and more.

10 T CLASS PARTY & READING, bring a favorite poem or very short piece of prose (by someone else) and one of your revised poems or an excerpt of a story to share.

12 R FINAL PORTFOLIOS **DUE BY 5PM**

In my mailbox at the writer's house (basement level of 58 W 10th St).